



September 1, 2006

Senator Tom Coburn  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management  
Government Information and International Security  
Attn: Anna Shopen  
439 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

FAX: 202-228-3796

Dear Senator Coburn:

This is in response to your letter of July 27 requesting information on federal appropriations for Montana State University (MSU).

Since 2000, MSU's federal activities have continued to grow with the result that we now have external grants and contracts in excess of \$100 million a year. We believe that most of this increase is the result of a growing recognition of the research excellence on our campus and the work which our researchers are doing. MSU is now in the top category of Carnegie research institutions designated "very high research activity", and among the top universities in the nation in the number of Goldwater scholarships won by our students.

Having said that, we have many unmet needs on campus and we still have a long way to go to become more competitive for the federal science and technology funding that is available -- funding that we deem essential not only to resolving specific research issues but also to enhancing our student's education, preserving our state's resources and quality of life, guaranteeing our state's safety and security and ensuring our economic competitiveness. It is important to note that most of our federal funding is from competitive sources; however, there are always unique circumstances, special situations and limited-interest areas where directed appropriations can help make up for the unavailability of federal programs. There are also instances where directed appropriations can help a small institution such as ours with start-up costs that help build our infrastructure and enable us to compete with large, longer-established research institutions.

Regarding directed appropriations we do have a process that has evolved over the years. It is a process that involves a multi-layered review of any request before it is ever presented to our Congressional delegation. The in-depth review evaluates numerous parameters including: an assessment of the proposed initiative's ability to lead to enhanced competitive funding; the potential for the proposed project to lead to economic development for Montana and the nation; and the project's ability to contribute in a significant

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way to the specific agencies mission. MSU takes the decision to request a directed appropriation very seriously. I believe we have been good stewards of the funds we have received from directed appropriations, and we have achieved a high level of productivity with these funds.

I also think it is important to point out that we have a very good working relationship with our Congressional delegation. We also know that there are in-depth, internal office reviews that occur after we submit our requests resulting in that members office selection and prioritization of which requests will move forward in the appropriations process. Our delegation has very dedicated and hard-working staff who know and understand our state and its needs. Regarding the overall pursuit of federal funds for research programs at MSU we do use external support to assist us in tracking and pursuing both Executive Branch and Congressional opportunities. The external federal relations support has been very effective in facilitating our interactions with the various federal agencies that support university research.

I hope this will give you some understanding of how we approach our federal efforts. We believe that the U.S. research community is a vital part of the strength of our nation and we believe that MSU's efforts are geared toward bringing the fruits of that research to the people of our state, region and nation.

Sincerely,



Geoffrey Gamble  
President

c: Senator Max Baucus  
Senator Conrad Burns  
Congressman Denny Rehberg